

Important information for all churches who employ staff

Employment law changes from April 2026

The new Employment Rights Act 2025 is coming into force this year, and employers need to be aware of the changes that are taking place from April 2026. (Other changes will come in later this year, and there are further changes from January 2027 – we will publish guidance nearer to the time).

This is a major shift in some areas of employment law and it is important that each church who employs staff understands the new requirements and acts to put them in place, both in terms of staff policies and in terms of letting staff know about these changes.

What should our church be doing now to prepare for this? There are three new Day 1 rights and a change to whistleblowing protections for employees from 6 April 2026 that are likely to affect Baptist churches:

Employment right	What your church needs to do now
<p>Changes to statutory sick pay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All employees will qualify for statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day of absence – no waiting period All employees will be eligible, regardless of their earnings (removing the Lower Earnings Limit) If earnings are less than the current SSP rate, they will be entitled to SSP at 80% of their weekly earnings The SSP rate will rise to £123.25 per week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review your contracts and sickness absence policies to reflect this change. ✓ Make sure that whoever deals with your payroll is aware of this change and applies it to any new sickness absence. ✓ Check if you need to start paying sick pay for anyone who is currently off sick ✓ Communicate this change to your staff and explain that this applies from 6 April 2026

Employment Right	What your church needs to do now
<p>Paternity Leave service requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to take paid statutory paternity leave will be available to all eligible employees from their first day of employment • Paternity leave can be taken for two weeks, either together or each week separately. It must be taken in whole week blocks. • Employees will be able to take both statutory paternity leave <u>and</u> shared parental leave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review your paternity leave and pay policy and amend it to reflect these changes ✓ Check if you have anyone who's partner is currently pregnant and likely to give birth after 6 April 2026, or who is currently using shared parental leave. ✓ Communicate this change to your staff and explain that these changes apply where a baby is born after 6 April 2026
<p>Parental Leave service requirement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For parents of babies born on or after 6 April 2026, there is no service requirement i.e. this is a Day 1 right. • This removes the previous eligibility requirement for one year of service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review your ordinary parental leave policy and amend it to reflect these changes ✓ Check if you have anyone who's partner is currently pregnant and likely to give birth after 6 April 2026, or may now qualify to apply for ordinary parental leave ✓ Communicate this change to your staff and explain that these changes apply where a baby is born after 6 April 2026
<p>Sexual harassment and whistleblowing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 6 April 2026, the Employment Rights Act 2025 amends the whistleblowing provisions so that complaints of sexual harassment will be treated as protected disclosures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ If you have a whistleblowing policy or a policy about harassment of staff, you will need to amend them to reflect this change ✓ Communicate this change to your staff and explain that this applies from 6 April 2026

Other changes also come into effect from April 2026, but are unlikely to affect most Baptist churches:

Redundancy

- The cap on weekly pay for statutory redundancy pay is likely to rise from £719 per week to an anticipated £751 per week. We will let you know when this new figure is published. This means anyone with a salary of £39,052 or above would be subject to the cap if they are made redundant.
- Employment tribunals can award up to 180 days of pay to each affected employee when employers fail to comply with collective redundancy consultation obligations. These obligations apply to the time periods where more than 20 employees are affected by redundancy in a 90 day period.

Trade union law reforms

- From 6 April 2026, the ERA 2025 simplifies the union recognition process and provides a period of 20 working days to agree union access during a statutory recognition. Very few Baptist churches have a recognised union, but if this affects you, please contact our HR Team at HR@baptist.org.uk.

And finally...

- To make sure that all employers pay attention to their employment law obligations, the government has created a new body, the Fair Work Agency, from 7 April 2026. The role of the FWA is to monitor and enforce core employment rights. We will wait and see what that looks like in practice.

For detailed information on this set of new employment rights you can refer to the ww.gov.uk reference information as follows:

[Statutory Sick Pay \(SSP\): employer guide: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

[Statutory Paternity Pay and Leave: employer guide: Entitlement - GOV.UK](#)

[Unpaid parental leave: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

[Whistleblowing Protections for Sexual Harassment](#)

Don't forget that our HR advice service is available to all BUGB member churches. Please contact us at HR@baptist.org.uk with your questions or query.